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ABSTRACT

This module is designed to help educators understand the roles and responsibilities of counselors in relation to special needs students. The guide includes a list of definitions and uses a question-and-answer format to provide information on the provisions of the Carl D. Perkins Act regarding counseling activities; the role of a special needs counselor; financing a special needs counselor; certification requirements; differences among a vocational counselor, special needs counselor, and secondary counselor; referral for services outside school; school-to-work transitions; career guidance for special needs students; and assessment requirements of the Perkins Act. A list of 27 references and resources is included. (KC)

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TITLE: COUNSELORS AND SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS



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ABSTRACT: This packet will help educators understand the roles and responsibilities of counselors in relation to special needs students.

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COUNSELORS AND SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Overview

Considerable responsibility has been placed on the school counselor to ensure that the career development needs of special needs learners are provided for in a systematic, comprehensive, and equal manner. Career guidance and counseling programs are to assist individuals to:

- o acquire self-assessment, career planning, career decision making and employability skills;
- o make the transition from education and training to work;
- o maintain marketability of current job skills in established occupations;
- o develop new skills to move away from declining occupational fields and enter new and emerging fields in high technology areas and fields experiencing shortages; and
- o obtain and use information concerning financial assistance for postsecondary, vocational education and job training.

In addition to providing career guidance and counseling activities, assessment of the special needs students' abilities, attitudes, interests, academic skills, and vocational skills for the purpose of developing appropriate educational programs is required.

This assessment data, both formal and informal, is important for the planning of a special needs student's program. With assessment and career guidance and counseling, special needs students receive appropriate program placement and are provided an opportunity for success.

Definitions/Terminology

Aptitude	A combination of abilities and other characteristics, whether native or acquired, known or believed to be indicative of an individual's ability to learn in some particular area.
Assessment	The process of determining the strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning styles of a student.
Career	The totality of work one does in his or her lifetime; thus, any person can have only one career. A developmental concept beginning in the very early years (prior to entering formal schooling) and continuing well into retirement years.
Career Assessment	Determining the strengths, weaknesses, learning styles, interests, and motivation of a student for the various roles he/she will play throughout life such as student, worker, user of leisure, spouse, parent, and community resident.

Career Education	The process of systematically coordinating all school, family and community components together to facilitate each individual's potential for economic, social and personal fulfillment.
Comprehensive Evaluation	A thorough examination of all dimensions of the individual's functioning using multiple procedures. These procedures may include, but are not limited to, formal testing.
Counseling	Regularly scheduled goal-oriented intervention that is responsive to the decision-making needs of the impaired individual or his family. The primary focus of this intervention is upon solving interpersonal problems such as disability acceptance, anxiety, over protection, and the ability to cope with daily demands which result from the client's disability.
Disadvantaged	Individuals (other than handicapped individuals) who have economic or academic disadvantages and who require special services and assistance in order to enable them to succeed in vocational education programs. The term includes individuals who are members of economically disadvantaged families, migrants, incarcerated, individuals who have limited English proficiency and individuals who are dropouts from, or who are identified as potential dropouts from, secondary school (P.L. 98-524).
Guidance	An integral part of each school's total educational program. It is developmental by design and includes sequential activities organized and implemented by certified school counselors with the support of teachers, administrators, students and parents. The guidance program includes: a guidance curriculum, individualized planning with students and their parents, responsive counseling, consultation and referral, and program management. It is designed to address the needs of all students by helping them to acquire competencies in career planning and exploration, knowledge of self and others, and educational and vocational development.
Handicapped	Applied to individuals who are mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech- or language-impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, or other health-impaired persons, or persons with specific learning disabilities, who by reason thereof require special education and related services, and who, because of their handicapping condition,

cannot succeed in the regular vocational education program without special education assistance (P.L. 98-524).

Interests

A desire or liking for specific activities or coursework.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. WHAT DOES THE CARL D. PERKINS ACT STATE REGARDING COUNSELING AND COUNSELING ACTIVITIES?

A. Section 204 of the Carl D. Perkins Act addresses the services and activities for the handicapped and for the disadvantaged. Specifically, it states that:

- (c) Each student who enrolls in vocational education programs and to whom subsection (b) applies shall receive--
 - (1) assessment of the interests, abilities and special needs of such student with respect to completing successfully the vocational education program;
 - (2) special services, including adaptation of curriculum, instruction, equipment, and facilities designed to meet the needs described in clause (1);
 - (3) guidance, counseling, and career development activities conducted by professionally trained counselors who are associated with the provision of such special services; and
 - (4) counseling services designed to facilitate the transition from school to post-school employment and career opportunities.

Q. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A SPECIAL NEEDS COUNSELOR?

A. The role of the special needs (SN) counselor will vary from LEA to LEA. Some SN counselors work only with disadvantaged students while others work with both handicapped and disadvantaged. No matter which population the SN counselor works with, the major focus should be providing career guidance activities that will lead to appropriate program placement.

Q. CAN ANY SCHOOL APPLY FOR MONIES TO HIRE A SPECIAL NEEDS COUNSELOR?

A. Yes, any school can apply but documentation indicating the need or justification for the position must be provided. Individuals should contact DESE for additional information and appropriate application forms.

Q. WHAT ARE THE CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR A SPECIAL NEEDS COUNSELOR?

A. In order to become a SN counselor an individual needs a valid Missouri teaching certificate, a minimum of two years of teaching experience, a master's degree with emphasis in guidance and counseling, one year of accumulated paid employment other than teaching and the recommendation for certification from a college or university based upon the completion of a planned program in guidance and counseling. For additional information or clarification about specific requirements, contact:

Vocational Special Needs and Guidance Services
P. O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102
(314) 751-1394

- OR -

Teacher Education and Certification
P. O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102
(314) 751-3847

Q. IF NO SPECIAL NEEDS COUNSELOR IS AVAILABLE, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE TYPES OF DUTIES?

A. The comprehensive secondary counselor has an obligation to every student within the LEA. Neither the vocational counselor nor the SN counselor is considered in determining the student/counselor ratio. Therefore, the number of students the counselor works with is the same whether or not a vocational or special needs counselor is available. The counselor needs to work with both the vocational and special educator to ensure students are receiving appropriate services. Developing strong lines of communication with vocational and special educators is the easiest way to ensure that the students' needs will be met.

Q. WHAT OTHER SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES FALL UNDER THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PORTION OF THE CARL D. PERKINS ACT?

A. The services and activities identified may include the following: vocational assessment/evaluation; occupational orientation; acquisition of career awareness and exploration materials; dropout prevention; outreach, placement, and follow-up; and other unique needs identified by the eligible recipient. ONLY the cost of additional services and activities which are required for special needs students and which cannot be provided by the existing counseling staff, may be considered.

Funds may be used for:

Professional Staff Salaries for:

Vocational Counseling Services and Activities (A minimum of a Missouri Secondary Counseling Certificate is required.) and

Vocational Evaluation (A minimum of a Baccalaureate Degree and a Missouri Vocational Evaluation Certificate or a Missouri Secondary Counseling Certificate is required.)

Aide Salaries - must have a minimum of 60 semester hours of college credit and an official transcript on file at the local level.

Clerical Salaries - Must be assigned directly to and supervised by the professional staff; no certification requirements.

Staff Fringe Benefits

Travel - For direct student services at the local level.

Equipment

Career Awareness and Exploration Materials

Assessment Materials

Assessment Supplies

Q. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VOCATIONAL COUNSELOR, SECONDARY COUNSELOR AND SPECIAL NEEDS COUNSELOR?

A. The difference between the three types of counselors lies with whom they work. The secondary counselor has a responsibility to all secondary students, regardless if they have special needs or not. The vocational counselor works only with students who are in the vocational school. These students may be special needs as well as non-special needs students. The special needs counselor works only with special needs students in either the vocational or nonvocational setting. Exact duties may vary from district to district.

Q. WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO COUNSELORS WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS?

A. Three excellent resources for counselors are Missouri Comprehensive Guidance: A Model for Program Development and Implementation, Career Assessment Instrument Resource Guide and Guidance Activities for Special Needs Students. The purpose of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Project is to help districts develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive, systematic high school programs. The Career Assessment Instrument Resource Guide provides counselors with a quick reference for formal and informal evaluation devices (tests). The intent of the Guidance

Activities for Special Needs Students is to provide counselors with activities to meet guidance objectives of the Missouri Model School Guidance Program.

Q. WHEN SHOULD A COUNSELOR REFER A STUDENT FOR SERVICES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

A. Referral is simply defined as the act of transferring an individual to another person or agency either within or outside the school. Personnel or agencies outside of school are utilized because they provide some form of specialized assistance not available from the original counselor or within the school setting. Referrals are often made in the following classifications: (1) psychological, (2) physiological or health, (3) social, (4) financial, (5) educational-vocational, and (6) growth and actualization.

Referral decisions are complex and each should be the subject of a case conference with the director of guidance and/or principal and director of special services (if appropriate). Effective referral requires (1) judgement to analyze need and type of service required, (2) knowledge of available specialists, services, and agency personnel and (3) skill in assisting students and their families to utilize referral services.

The counselor's primary considerations in the referral process are as follows: (1) information on the needs of the student and the validity of such information, (2) other information that could be obtained from other teachers or support personnel, (3) what remedial or preventative treatment is indicated and how can these services be rendered, and (4) the amount of time required to provide the services.

These considerations require an adequate understanding of the situation before considering referral. It is important to know the context or life situation within which the problem exists. Consideration should be given to how a particular problem or need relates to other aspects of the student's life. The quest for additional information is a setting for contacts with other staff members for the purpose of providing a means of evaluating all available information. It is in accordance with ethical standards for the counselor to discuss the situation with other professional persons on the staff of the institution.

After consultation with the appropriate colleagues or administrative personnel, discussion with student and parents is the next step. It is imperative that the counselor be fully knowledgeable of potential credible referral sources.

Involvement of parents as soon as possible without violating ethical responsibilities to the student is essential. Many agencies require parental cooperation before treating children. It is important to have the knowledge, consent, and cooperation of parents prior to making a referral to a community agency.

Q. HOW DOES THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES MANDATED IN THE CARL D. PERKINS ACT RELATE TO TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK?

A. The Carl D. Perkins Act specifically addresses the transition from school to work priority. The Act states: "Each student who enrolls in vocational education programs...shall receive...counseling services designed to facilitate the transition from school to post-school employment and career opportunities." These services might include assistance in determining postsecondary training or securing financial aid, selecting appropriate courses or developing a long-range plan (4-year plan), working with parents in facilitating the transition from school to work, and providing any additional counseling necessary to smooth the transition.

Q. WHAT ARE SOME CAREER GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE USED WITH SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS?

A. The Carl D. Perkins Act specifies some activities; however, the opportunity exists for creativity in the development of career guidance activities to meet the needs of all students. The American School Counselor Association role statement (1985) specifies the following as common core experiences for all students:

1. Individual and group counseling to clarify work values and develop coping and planning skills;
2. Formal and informal assessment of abilities, personality traits, and interests;
3. Occupational/career information through community linkages such as field trips, speakers, shadowing experiences, and internships;
4. A career information center providing job hunting skills, interviewing skills, educational and training opportunities and financial aid possibilities;
5. Training, goal setting, and decision making for the selection of tentative career paths based on the above;
6. An opportunity for integrating academic and career planning, leading to the selection of a high school curriculum as it relates to the appropriate career clusters; and
7. An opportunity for continuous evaluation and revision of the goal setting process and active planning, including an annual review of all students' plans of study.

Modification of activities may be necessary to meet the needs of special needs students. Sarkees & Scott (1985) have suggested modifications which seem applicable to the guidance activities included in this module. The considerations relative to modification are establishing realistic goals, establishing a favorable learning environment, matching learning styles with teaching styles, establishing readability levels for materials used, selecting appropriate instructional materials, and modifying existing materials.

Q. WHAT DOES THE RECENT LEGISLATION MANDATE IN TERMS OF ASSESSMENT?

A. P.L. 94-142 defines and interprets assessment as "procedures used...to determine whether a child is handicapped and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. The term means procedures used selectively with an individual child and does not include basic tests administered to or procedures used with all children in a school, grade or class" (U. S. Government, Federal Register, August 23, 1977). All testing materials used must be selected and administered so that they do not racially or culturally discriminate against the child.

The following minimum guidelines regarding assessment procedures have been provided in P.L. 94-142 procedures:

1. Must be provided and administered in the child's native language, if feasible, or any other method of communication.
2. Must be valid for the specific purpose for which they are used.
3. Must be administered by trained personnel and as described by the procedure.
4. Must be designed to assess specific areas of educational need and not just general intelligence.
5. Must accurately reflect the child's aptitude and achievement level and not reflect the child's impairment.
6. Must be used jointly. No single procedure is used for determining educational placement.
7. Must be administered by a multidisciplinary team.
8. Must assess the child in all areas related to the disability. This should include, when appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence and adaptive behavior, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, P.L. 98-524, requires that LEAs assure assessment of the interests, abilities and special needs of all handicapped and disadvantaged students enrolled in vocational education programs with respect to their successfully completing the vocational program (U. S. Government, Federal Register, August 16, 1985).

To determine that this assurance has been met, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Vocational and Adult Education offers the following guidelines:

1. Identify at what stage of preparation the student is currently (vocational awareness, exploration, or preparation).
2. Identify the occupational area(s) in which the student has interest, aptitude and ability.

3. Identify what particular learning requirements (special needs) will need to be met if the student is to succeed in a specific vocational program.
4. Identify a tentative job title, potential employment outcome or post-school goal for the student that would lead to an appropriate vocational program placement.

In Missouri this evaluation usually occurs prior to enrollment in vocational-technical education programs. LEAs receiving funding from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act have the responsibility for evaluations of special needs students enrolled in vocational education programs. All evaluation data available on a student should be utilized to make the evaluation a comprehensive and cooperative effort. The results of the vocational assessment (for handicapped students) are to be incorporated into the diagnostic summary and used in developing the IEP at the student's secondary school. For the disadvantaged student the assessment information is kept as part of the permanent record, and should be utilized in developing a vocational plan for the student.

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